AN

ESSAY

ON

DUELLING.

WRITTEN WITH A VIEW

TO DISCOUNTENANCE THIS

BARBAROUS AND DISGRACEFUL PRACTICE.

Audax omnia perpeti
Gens humana ruit per vetitum nefas.

HOR.

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1792.

ADVERTISEMENT.

EVERY virtuous Man muſt lament the fatal Conſequences of Duelling; a Vice, which is the Offspring of Prejudice, and the Bane of Society. I have, in the Courſe of this Eſſay, attempted to combat and overpower it with the Arms of Reaſon.—How far I have ſucceeded, the Public muſt determine. I flatter myſelf, however, that its Candour will extenuate the Faults with which it may abound, from a Conſideration of the Motive by which I have been actuated. My Arguments might, perhaps, have carried greater Weight, and I might have addreſſed myſelf to the Feelings with greater Efficacy, had I deſcanted on one or two of thoſe melancholy Inſtances which have recently occurred, and which are freſh in the Memories of all. But I

have

have declined this unpleaſant Taſk, from a Principle of Delicacy, being unwilling to awaken that Grief, or renew that Diſtreſs, which, it is to be hoped, has loſt a Part of its Poignancy, but which nothing but the lenient Hand of Time can cure.

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IT is a melancholy truth, that duelling has, within theſe few years, become ſo prevalent, that ſcarcely a day paſſes but ſome one falls a ſacrifice to the falſe notions of modern honour. And they will moſt aſſuredly continue to gain ground, unleſs the legiſlature interfere; becauſe the generality of mankind, when a cuſtom is once firmly eſtabliſhed, however repugnant it may be to right reaſon and common ſenſe, will be prejudiced in its favour; and, rather than abandon it, will ſubmit to be actuated by

principles, which draw their very exiſtence from the groſſeſt folly and abſurdity. But that theſe principles ſhould aſſume ſuch a powerful influence over the opinions of men of ſenſe and reflection, as to induce them to violate the moſt ſacred and poſitive injunctions of religion, as to prevail on them to forfeit every pretenſion to genuine philanthropy and true virtue, in order to obtain the reputation of being guided by a ſtandard of honour, which barbarians have deviſed, and which profligates ſanction and encourage, proves the invalidity of reaſon when the paſſions are fermented, or elſe affords a ſtrong preſumption how much more the opinion of the world is valued than ſelf-approbation.

Many of the prejudices, which have been engrafted on ſociety, are productive of happineſs, and it may even be politic to cheriſh thoſe, which are more indirect in their conſequences

ſequences; but we ſurely can run no riſk in diſcountenancing miſconſtructions, which proceed from a perverted underſtanding, or a vitiated heart, and whoſe effects are viſibly bad.

In the diſcuſſion of this intereſting ſubject, an enquiry into the origin of ſingle combat naturally preſents itſelf, and arreſts our attention; and, as it will enable me to develope my ideas with more perſpicuity, and to enforce my arguments with greater energy, it is an enquiry which, I muſt hope, will not ſtand in need of an apology.

If we extend our view over thoſe parts of the Weſtern world, which attracted the notice of the German tribes, and in which they ultimately ſettled, we may obſerve, that the leading features of the governments, which they eſtabliſhed in different parts, bore to each other a very ſtriking reſemblance. Unaccuſtomed, in their own

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vountry, to the ſeverity of reſtraint, where-ever they directed their courſe, they ſcru-pulouſly maintained thoſe notions of free-dom and independence, which their anceſ-tors had tranſmitted to them, and which their own perſonal vigour and activity were calculated to inſure. When a country was ſubdued, the victorious troops immediately divided the conquered lands, and the por-tion, which was allotted to each ſoldier, was conſidered as a recompenſe due to his exertions. He had the entire diſpoſal of it, and held it of no ſuperior lord. At their firſt ſettlement, therefore, the number of allodial proprietors muſt neceſſarily have been very great; and, although they ſoon perceived the neceſſity of uniting for their common ſecurity, and of entering into a tacit obligation to take up arms for the de-fence of the ſtate, yet, many ages elapſed, before the ſupreme magiſtrate acquired ſuf-

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ſufficient power to enable him to depreſs, or withſtand, the overbearing ſpirit of his nobles. This could not be effected, before the changes, which property undergoes, in the advancement of ſociety (by the extenſion of one intereſt, and the diminution of another) had introduced and ſtrengthened the reciprocal ties of allegiance and protection.

Human nature, in all ages, and in all countries, has been found much the ſame, when an allowance has been made for thoſe phyſical effects, which the climate may occaſion. The authentic page of hiſtory records but few inſtances, when men have been inveſted with power and authority, without aſcertaining the extreme boundaries of their prerogatives; and, in general, when they have been unreſtrained by laws, their tyranny has been proportioned to their ſtrength. Experience ſufficient atteſts, the miſeries

miſeries which may reſult from the arrogance of deſpotiſm, and how dangerous it is to leave the ebullitions of pride and reſentment, to their natural courſe. Yet, in the earlier periods of the Gothic polity, theſe inconveniences were felt and tolerated. The paſſive, but unfortunate, inhabitants of a conquered country, groaned under the weight of their grievances, without being animated or conſoled by the proſpect of redreſſing them. Every allodial proprietor was uncontrolled; accountable to no man for his actions; amenable to no court for his crimes. The law of the ſtrongeſt, was the only law which could be enforced. And, indeed, ſeveral ages ſubſequent to their invaſion, we find the great Barons in ſuch a ſtate of independence, that, when any private diſputes aroſe, they diſdained to ſubmit to any other authority, or to refer to any other arbiter, than the ſword.

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The different kingdoms of Europe were ſo frequently diſturbed by inteſtine commotions, that it was found requiſite, minutely to aſcertain the rights of private war; and theſe regulations formed a diſtinguiſhing feature in their ſyſtems of juriſprudence. The animoſities of theſe haughty Chieftians, were purſued with the moſt acrimonious malevolence, and were ſometimes carried to ſuch an alarming pitch, as to threaten the exiſtence of the community. Having imbibed, in their infancy, the moſt ridiculous ideas of honour, and trained up in the continual exerciſe of warlike feats, they embraced, with avidity, every opportunity of diſplaying their courage and ſkill. They cultivated in their breaſts the ſeeds of revenge, as diligently, as if they had been productive of benevolence, and let no occaſion eſcape of exciting and gratifying this brutal paſſion. They were even encou-

raged in theſe exceſſes by the civil magiſtrate. In diſputes, reſpecting property, the parties frequently affronted each other in open court. Allegations were aſſerted on one ſide, and as peremptorily contradicted on the other. Every method of aggravation was reſorted to, which could inflame their reſentment, and heighten their enmity. The lie was at length given, and the judge, without any farther deliberation, ordered the trial to be decided by the ſword. Judicial combat, indeed, ſoon became ſo prevalent, and eventually arrived at ſuch an unwarrantable and ſuperſtitious extent, that queſtions of the greateſt difficulty, and of the laſt importance, were determined by the iſſue of a duel. Superiority was conſidered as an unerring proof of innocence, and as an atteſtation from Heaven in favour of the vanquiſher.

Before

Before the inſtitution of judicial combat, other ordinations were enacted for the detection of guilt, of a nature ſtill more unaccountable and abſurd; ſuch as the trials by fire and boiling water; but as ſoon as this mode of terminating legal procedures was deviſed, it ſo perfectly coincided with the warlike notions of the age, that every other fell into diſrepute, and was gradually exploded.

But what contributed, moſt powerfully to awaken and diffuſe this martial ſpirit, which, in the end, by the eſtabliſhment of military juriſprudence, aſſaulted the throne of mercy, and thwarted the diſpenſations of juſtice, was the ſanction and applauſe which it received from the fair ſex. It was neceſſary to encounter perils, and ſurmount difficulties, before any knight could hope for favour or compaſſion from the object of his affections. Before he

had eſtabliſhed his fame, by his military atchievements, his miſtreſs could not, with any degree of propriety, evince tokens of partiality, or even venture to liſten to his ſolicitations. The expeditions to Jeruſalem, for the recovery of the Holy Land, preſented an ample and a glorious field for the diſplay of diſintereſted valour and heroiſm; and every one knows with what enthuſiaſtic zeal they were undertaken. It is impoſſible to contemplate the infatuated ardour with which all ranks of people engaged in theſe romantic enterpriſes, without being aſtoniſhed at the wild conceptions of the human mind, when impelled by fanaticiſm, or miſguided by ſuperſtition; and, notwithſtanding the beneficial conſequences which they produced, by reforming and poliſhing the manners of the Weſtern world, yet the adoption of a ſcheme ſo pregnant with ruin,

ruin, muſt ever remain a ſignal monument of the bigotry and ignorance of the age. How the enthuſiaſm with which this uſeleſs project was eſpouſed, would have claimed our veneration, had it been exerted in deeds of public ſpirit and utility! But, at this rude period, men were unacquainted with the ſtricter ties of ſocial intercourſe, and with thoſe delicacies and refinements which civilization introduces. Totally ignorant of the worth of literature, they regarded induſtry and ingenuity with contempt. No profeſſion was honourable but that of arms; even agriculture, the moſt uſeful of all ſciences, was neglected and deſpiſed; nor did any of thoſe nobler occupations, which enhance and embelliſh ſociety, receive the patronage of the great.

"*Nec arare terram, aut expectare annum, tam facile perſuaſeris, quam vocare hoſtes, et vulnera mereri.*"

When the Goths, Vandals, and other Northern nations, deluged the Roman empire, the ravages which they committed, left a ſad memorial of the ſmall advances they had made in the arts of life. Wherever they directed their fury, the arts and ſciences fled; and thoſe plains, which before were clothed with verdure, and were proverbial for fertility, aſſumed the melancholy aſpect of barrenneſs and deſolation. As if determined to reduce every thing to a level with themſelves, they aſſiduouſly ſapped the foundation of all uſeful knowledge. The wiſdom and experience of paſt ages, were contemned; and were obliged to retreat before the profane, but ſpirited, attacks of theſe fierce barbarians.

A people, who were ſo ignorant of the worth of literature, muſt neceſſarily have formed very rude and undefined ideas of moral

moral rectitude. Neither enlightened by revelation, nor admoniſhed by the ſage inſtructions of philoſophy, nor rendered virtuous from habit, their paſſions raged with violence, and the firſt impulſe, unleſs counteracted by an inſurmountable obſtacle, was immediately obeyed. They regarded the faculties of the mind as unworthy of their attention, and ſtrangely imagined that perſonal valour and proweſs, either conſtituted or implied every virtue which dignifies and adorns human nature.—Whilſt the efforts of genius were ſuppreſſed, and the reſearches of invention diſcountenanced, the inelegant exertions of bodily ſtrength were the criterion of merit, and the object of encomium.

But theſe fatal prejudices can only be attributed to their unadvanced ſtate of ſociety, and the ineffectual reſources of their government. Continually engaged in

in war, all their views centred in theſe two maxims; to defend themſelves, and to attack their adverſaries. The diffuſion of martial enthuſiaſm was, therefore, of the greateſt conſequence to them, and the encouragement which they gave to it, was boundleſs. Perſonal courage and addreſs was the only road to notice or preferment; nor could either glory or reward be derived from any other occupation than that of arms. A ſtrict adherence to this political tenet, made every man deſirous of diſtinguiſhing himſelf for his bravery, and certainly tended to eſtabliſh thoſe ſingular and faſtidious definitions of honour which afterwards prevailed. Every gentleman thinking himſelf bound to ſupport, with his ſword, what he had uttered with his lips, and the civil magiſtrate abetting this unconſcionable opinion, judicial combat (as I have already obſerved) ſoon became

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the only mode of effectually terminating a diſpute, or ſubſtantiating a claim.

Thus did the vague and precarious laws of chance gain ground, whilſt thoſe of reaſon and equity were diſregarded; and a great length of time elapſed, before the orthodox principles of juriſprudence were explained or underſtood.

It certainly requires no great depth of underſtanding, immediately to perceive, the folly and extravagance of ſuch regulations; nor can we review this heterogeneous ſyſtem of legiſlation, without lamenting the errors and blindneſs of mankind.—How can thoſe advantages, which ſociety is calculated to afford, exiſt, where the weak are unſheltered from the violence of the powerful; where neither the interference of the magiſtrate can prevent, nor the remonſtrances of conſcience deter; but where ſtrength muſt overcome, and

infirmity

infirmity yield? Yet their introduction may, in ſome meaſure, be juſtified; not only becauſe they are congenial with the crude and inflexible ideas of a turbulent and unpoliſhed people, but becauſe the ſcience of government is, of all others, the moſt intricate, and diſclaiming theoretical hypotheſis, ſolely depends on practical knowledge. The mind may, no doubt, form laws, lay down principles, propoſe plans, and organize ſyſtems; ſtill, as we cannot judge of their coherence and ſufficiency, till they be put to the teſt, nothing but experience can expoſe their imperfections, or prove their aptitude to human affairs.

But all thoſe motives which recommended the adoption and countenance of this prepoſterous and barbarous cuſtom of appealing to the ſword, as the arbiter of right and wrong, have, long ſince, happily

ſubſided. Shall we, therefore, continue to ſanction it, under the fulleſt conviction, that we are acting againſt common ſenſe, and againſt every principle of natural and revealed religion?

Let me addreſs myſelf to cool, unimpaſſioned reaſon, and let me aſk, Where is the man, who, in the ſolemn hours of meditation, ever approved the practice of duelling? The mind ſhudders at the contemplation; our feelings revolt at the thought; the heart is appalled and trembles. Let him, I ſay, reflect on its horrors; let him enumerate its devaſtations; let him imagine a ſword planted in the boſom of his friend; let him conceive a dagger, juſt drawn from the wound, and reeking with the warm blood of one, who, perhaps, has been his benefactor. Can any future conduct make atonement for a crime ſo inhuman, for reſentment ſo ungenerous?

If an excuſe can with difficulty be pleaded for the prevalence of ſuch premeditated and implacable revenge, among ſavages, whoſe minds are untutored, and whoſe paſſions are unreſtrained; how humiliating then muſt be the diſgrace which it reflects on a civilized and enlightened people!

Let us now review the arguments which are urged in its defence.

Thoſe who are advocates for this cuſtom, and who wiſh to ſupport it in its full extent, in order to diſſemble their real motives, and conceal the ſavage ſeverity of their hearts, reaſon as if they were influenced by no other conſiderations, than the advantage and good order of ſociety. They contend, that if the weak were debarred the uſe of the piſtol, they would be in conſtant danger of being inſulted and oppreſſed by thoſe, whom nature has endowed with more bodily ſtrength and activity.

And

And to corroborate this aſſertion, they advance that the piſtol places every one on a level.

Both theſe poſitions are totally falſe, and may be eaſily confuted.

In the firſt place, a man's perſon and reputation are particularly protected by the laws; and, if he meet with an inſult which *really* ſullies his character, or with an oppreſſion which *really* affects his perſon, he can always obtain reparation. And, as it is undoubtedly the firſt duty of a citizen, implicitly to obſerve thoſe laws which have been adminiſtered by his country as a rule of civil conduct, he ought always to apply to them for redreſs. The courts of judicature are the only tribunals which are competent to diſpenſe juſtice, and from which alone we can expect that it will be diſtributed. In theſe tribunals, a knowledge, a power, an integrity, reſides, in-

capable of being miſled by prejudice or paſſion, of being intimidated b threats, or ſoftened by perſuaſion; but, where the enumeration of facts will be attentively liſtened to; where the weight of evidence will be impartially balanced; and where a deciſion will be made, according to the precepts of equity, and the concluſions of reaſon.

No plea, but that of abſolute neceſſity, can juſtify the infliction of a penalty by a private hand. If, for inſtance, I find myſelf, from the forcible and unſuſpected attack of another, in ſuch a perilous ſituation, that delay would prove fatal to me, then the ſtrongeſt law of nature, ſelf-preſervation, authoriſes me, not only to defend, but to ſecure my life. If I can evidently anſwer this end without depriving my adverſary of his exiſtence, a violent conduct, on my part, would be very reprehenſible.

henſible. But ſhould there be any reaſon to doubt of my ſafety, by allowing him to eſcape, I am certainly warranted to proceed to extremities. In caſes, however, where no immediate danger is incurred, I am not entitled to arrogate to myſelf the office of a judge, and to define what degree of puniſhment the tranſgreſſion demands. Eventual determination, on the lives and property of his fellow-citizens, is the moſt ſacred truſt with which a man can be inveſted; and, were every individual allowed arbitrarily to aſſume its functions, it would, from that moment, ceaſe to poſſeſs influence, or to inſpire reſpect, and all the beneficial effects of a ſocial union would be completely ſubverted and deſtroyed. If every one be at liberty to ſketch out a temporary and intereſted ſyſtem of his own, the laws muſt inevitably ſurrender their controlling power, and can no longer be of any ſervice. But, as

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they were inſtituted for the general advantage and convenience of ſociety, their dignity ought always to be maintained, and they ought never to be ſuffered to be infringed by the levity or the inconſiſtency of an individual. Subordination to the laws is the main ſpring of every civil aſſociation: it directs and quickens the other operations of government, and without it the wiſeſt regulations muſt be productive of anarchy and confuſion.

I ſhall now advert to the ſecond argument.

The notion, which has been imbibed and cheriſhed by many, that when a man is armed with a piſtol, all inequality ceaſes, is likewiſe groundleſs and abſurd; for, depend upon it, the art and management of a piſtol, vary fully as much as bodily ſtrength and addreſs. It is, indeed, ſufficiently known, that thoſe who profeſs duelling

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(and, to the diſgrace of human nature, there are many who may be claſſed under this denomination) have, by dint of practice, attained to ſuch conſummate ſkill, that did not fatal experience evince its extent, we ſhould be inclined to diſtruſt the fact, and to ſuſpect that the glowing colours of exaggeration had attempted to delude us. In the accounts of the ſavages of America, which have been tranſmitted to us by authors, whoſe intelligence or veracity cannot be called in queſtion, many inſtances are adduced of their wonderful expertneſs in the uſe of their warlike weapons. Obliged to rely on them, both for ſecurity and ſubſiſtence, their only views, in cultivating theſe arts, are ſelf-defence when annoyed by an enemy, and ſelf-preſervation when aſſaulted by hunger. But the band of ſavages, which infeſt poliſhed nations, although they have not the ſame

motives to influence their conduct, manifeſt the ſame eagerneſs, and frequently acquire the ſame dexterity, in the purſuit. Let me aſk, What chance another man, who perhaps never diſcharged a piſtol in the courſe of his life, has to eſcape unhurt in an encounter with ſuch a proficient? The boaſted level vaniſhes: Add to this defect of art, the ſenſibility of a benevolent mind, and the diſparity is increaſed. The conſcience of the one is probably upbraiding him, as his finger touches the trigger; whilſt the other, inured to bloodſhed, and familiarized with murder, betrays not the ſmalleſt agitation. His pulſe even does not beat quicker than on any other occaſion; his intention is death; his aim is deliberate and ſure. Would but men allow themſelves to be convinced of their folly and perverſeneſs; would they adhere to virtue when it is pointed out to them; they would not

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heſitate an inſtant to abjure laws, which are execrable in their nature, and baneful in their conſequences, and which can only diſſeminate miſery and deſtruction. As if the natural and unavoidable evils of life were not ſufficiently ſevere, the ingenuity of mankind has always been employed, not in alleviating them by the meditations of philoſophy, but in augmenting them by the practice of abſurdity.

Another reaſon, which is ſuppoſed to carry great weight, and which is conſidered by many as unanſwerable, has been frequently referred to as an inconteſtable proof of the neceſſity of ſtrictly maintaining the execrable and diſtorted notions of modern honour.

The ſmalleſt reflection, however, will demonſtrate its futility.

It has been aſſerted, that one gentleman cannot refuſe to give ſatisfaction to another,

without incurring the imputation of cowardice, and the neglect and contempt of his equals. This will depend entirely on his former character. If he be a wretch whoſe morals are debauched, and whoſe life is reprobate, I admit that ſuch an excuſe will generally be deemed ſufficient; becauſe, aſſociating only with thoſe, whoſe manners are equally licentious, and whoſe ideas are equally depraved, when his companions perceive that he has not courage to defend thoſe actions, or to extricate himſelf from thoſe difficulties, in which his propenſity for miſchief and vice are continually engaging him, they will naturally diſcard him from their ſociety: for as honour and confidence are requiſite among thieves, ſo a brutal ferocity is neceſſary to protect thoſe, whoſe riotous and indecent behaviour is daily expoſing them to chaſtiſement. But if, on the other hand, he be a man who has always

ways practiſed virtue, and encouraged merit; who has been diſtinguiſhed for the punctual diſcharge of all the duties of life; no one, whoſe eſteem is worth retaining, will aſperſe his character, or diſclaim his friendſhip, or renounce his acquaintance, becauſe he has nobly ſcorned to deviate from thoſe principles which he has uniformly profeſſed, and ſteadily obſerved. The envenomed ſhafts of malice may, perhaps, attempt to "filch from him his good name," but they will be aimed againſt an adamantine rock, which they can neither penetrate nor injure; whilſt men of ſenſe and candour will applaud that philoſophy, which enables him to deſpiſe the cenſures of a miſguided world, when a compliance with its opinion, would deſtroy his peace of mind, and endanger his eternal welfare. For, independently of every other conſideration, does it appear conſonant with rea-

ſon, juſtice, or morality, that a man, of real worth and importance to ſociety, ſhould riſk his life, for the exchange of a ſingle word which honeſt reſentment has dictated, with a wretch, who is an outcaſt from the ſociety of all who indicate the ſlighteſt regard for their reputation, and whoſe actions are a perpetual exhibition of the prophaneneſs and diſſoluteneſs of the human heart! But, granting them to be men of equal value, equal integrity, equal beneficence; are they, for a trivial diſagreement, which the mediation of a mutual friend might eaſily accommodate, to have recourſe to the moſt violent meaſures? Are they to depart from the conſtant tenour of their lives, and to embitter the remainder of their days, merely to pleaſe cuſtom? Are they to act againſt the keeneſt compunctions of conſcience? Are they to commit an involuntary deed equally reproachful to them both?

both? Are they to run the hazard of embruing their hands in the blood of a fellow creature, and of incurring the diſpleaſure or the vengeance of their Maker, by ruſhing into his preſence uncalled for, and ſo unprepared? Are they to abſolve themſelves from the amiable ſenſations of conjugal love? Are they to forget the tender ties of parental affection? Are they to ſtifle the ſweet and generous ſentiments of friendſhip? Are they to make ſuch important ſacrifices, for no other purpoſe, than to be accounted faſhionable men, and to avoid the deriſion of thoſe, whoſe approbation can neither confer honour, nor inſure reſpect?

It has alſo been ſaid, that duelling enforces the obſervation of the rules of politeneſs, and generates courage.

On the outward forms of politeneſs, which are chiefly compoſed of ridiculous

grimace,

grimace, oſtentatious parade, and unmeaning geſticulation, it may poſſibly have ſome trifling influence. But on that courteſy, which emanates from true benevolence of heart, which is independent of ceremony, and which the genuine principles of hoſpitality and philanthropy preſcribe, it can have no effect. It may, ſometimes, curb that tongue which is prone to licentiouſneſs; it may ſometimes regulate thoſe manners which are addicted to blunt incivility; but it cannot chalk out the line of propriety to him who practiſes urbanity from the beneficence of his nature, and from the enlarged conſideration of the relative duties of man to man. It may ſcatter the ſeed, and mature the growth, of hypocricy; but it cannot create any of the eſſential qualities of good-breeding.

And

And, when it is recollected, that the ancient Greeks and Romans were unacquainted with this diſgraceful method of revenge, ſurely few underſtandings can be ſo blinded by prejudice, as to place any reliance on the ſecond affirmation. Did theſe renowned people ſtand in need of *ſuch* a ſtimulus to inſpire them with patriotiſm, with magnanimity, and with virtuous emulation, to puſh them on to victory, and crown them with unfading laurels? What modern nation has produced greater heroes, or afforded more ſublime inſtances of firmneſs and intrepidity? It may, perhaps, be ſtarted, in reply, that theſe ſame Romans, notwithſtanding the extent and rapidity of their conqueſts, were, at laſt, repulſed, and obliged to yield to the more determined reſolution and vigorous attacks of their Northern neighbours. But the ſpecioufneſs of this remark will

not

not miſlead the intelligent reader. He will conſider that the Romans who ſubmitted, were a people totally different, in every reſpect, from the Romans who ſubdued. They bore not the moſt remote reſemblance to their warlike anceſtors. At that period, when the fury of the barbarians was irreſiſtible, and when their frequent eruptions portended the ſubverſion of the Roman empire, all thoſe wiſe maxims of government, which had elevated it to ſuch pre-eminence, and preſerved it for ſo many ages, had been gradually forſaken. Public virtue and public ſpirit were no longer the principles which ſtimulated the body of the people. The baneful effects of tyranny had annihilated patriotiſm; thoſe of luxury had relaxed diſcipline, and introduced univerſal corruption. Vice and immorality had pervaded all ranks of people; and the only diſtinction between

the nobleman and the clown, was ſome trifling refinements in his habits of licentiouſneſs.

" *Verum ubi pro labore deſidia, pro continentia et equitate lubido atque ſuperbia invaſare ; fortuna ſimul cum moribus immutatur.*"

But what ought certainly to produce an infinitely greater effect, than any arguments to which I have hitherto reſorted, is the line of conduct which the Scriptures delineate, as alone worthy of our imitation. They recommend throughout, meekneſs and humility, and enjoin us to pardon another rather than ourſelves ; they exhort us, with more than parental earneſtneſs and ſolicitude, to keep a watchful and ſuſpicious guard over our hearts, and pathetically point out the folly and the danger of ſwerving from the path of rectitude and virtue. Are theſe divine precepts, on the obſervation of which,

our eternal welfare depends, to be wantonly ſported with, or inconſiderately rejected? Were they conveyed to us in the obſcure and evaſive terms of ſophiſtry, they might, perhaps, in ſome points, admit of controverſy; but, delivered in the clear and energetic language of truth, the meaneſt underſtanding is capable of comprehending them. By obeying them, we not only ſecure an everlaſting recompenſe, but we abundantly reap the fruits of our ſubmiſſion during this life. For he who properly reſpects the ordinances of God, will be bleſſed with a good conſcience, and animated with the glorious proſpect of future and endleſs bliſs. Uniting religion with morality, he will be inſpired with true fortitude; which conſiſts, not in the deſperate, infatuated raſhneſs of the duelliſt; but, in that calm and equal diſpoſition of mind, which is acquired from a firm reliance on the power and

goodneſs of Providence, and from a conſciouſneſs of having exerted ourſelves in the diſcharge of our various duties, and which enables us to contemplate the miſeries of mortality without ſhuddering; to bear the reverſes of fortune without repining.

" *Juſtum et tenacem propoſiti virum*
Non civium ardor prava jubentium,
Non vultus inſtantis tyranni
Mente quatit ſolida, neque Auſter
Dux inquieti turbidus Adriæ,
Nec fulminantis magna Jovis manus;
Si fractus illabatur orbis,
Impavidum ferient ruinæ!"

Thus could a Heathen write.

A noble theatre ſtill preſents itſelf for the diſplay of generous valour; a theatre, on which we may perform, in obedience to the dictates of nature, the precepts of morality, and the opinion of the world. I mean the defence of our country, when attacked by an inſidious and ambitious foe.

Let, therefore, the man who is desirous of testifying his courage, trace out the path which leads to fame, and pursue that plan which may be beneficial to the community, and ornamental to himself. Let him establish his magnanimity by gathering laurels in the service of the state, and increasing its glory. Let him distinguish himself, in the hour of danger, by his cool and deliberate conduct. Let him animate zeal, by his spirit, when irresolution is spreading. Let him repress ardour, by his circumspection, when it may be attended with fatal consequences. This is the man whose fortitude will be commended; whose character will be esteemed. And who would not censure such a man for risking his life in single combat? Let us remember how the celebrated Marshal Turenne behaved on a similar occasion. Convinced that his services were of importance to his country,

country, he ſcorned to put the punctilios of honour in competition with ſo momentous a conſideration. Satisfied alſo, that his Sovereign had alone the right of eſtimating his value, or of diſpenſing with his abilities, he, without heſitation, referred the letter, which contained the cartel, to him, and was commanded not to accept it. Let us then no longer impute to cowardice, what is frequently the deliberate reſult of the moſt commendable prudence.

It is generally acknowledged that more firmneſs of mind may be diſplayed, in overlooking, than in reſenting an affront: and all muſt admit, when this paſſiveneſs proceeds from no baſe nor daſtardly motive, that it implies a noble and generous heart. Revenge is the criterion of a narrow ſoul, and is, in a certain degree, in the power of every one. Whilſt we are meditating it, all our nobler faculties are lulled to reſt,

and

and we are entirely under the dominion of hatred and malice; but, to forgive an injury, requires a degree of philoſophy and ſelf-command, which but few poſſeſs.

Before I cloſe this eſſay, I ſhall take a curſory view of the ſyſtematic duelliſt; and, by expoſing his depravity, endeavour to deter others from the imitation of his conduct.

The ſyſtematic duelliſt is one of thoſe monſters, whom Nature, in her wrath, now and then produces, in order to exhibit the height of human profligacy. He is a wretch, without ſhame, without morality, without religion; in whoſe breaſt every degrading paſſion is conſtantly in action, and propelling him to the vileſt and moſt nefarious purpoſes. His heart is uniformly callous to the ſofter emotions of pity and forgiveneſs, and all the faculties of his ſoul are perverted and contradictory.

His

His only glory conſiſts, in rendering himſelf contemptible, and others miſerable. He prides himſelf on the numbers he has murdered in cold blood, and the many families he has plunged into affliction, or want; and is ever on the watch for ſome unfortunate victim to add to his trophies. A highwayman, who, urged by the ſharpeſt miſery and diſtreſs, by the keenneſs of unavoidable poverty, by the wan and meagre countenance of his wife, by the piercing and irreſiſtible cries of his hungry and emaciated children, forcibly extorts a ſolitary ſhilling from another, is condemned by the laws to ſuffer an ignominious death; whilſt he, who gluts himſelf with innocent blood, who deſolates without provocation, is tamely permitted to fatten on his crimes, and is even regarded by ſome as a man of high courage, and of a nice ſenſe of honour. O Juſtice! how long wilt thou

ſuffer

ſuffer thine inſtitutions to be invaded? How long wilt thou allow vice to reign unmoleſted? How long wilt thou refrain from letting thy hand fall on that head, which has ſo deliberately ſolicited, ſo repeatedly invoked, thy vengeance? On a wretch, whom mankind ought, with one common aſſent, to extirpate; for he, who has broken through the laws of ſociety, who has trampled on every moral and ſocial obligation, ought not to be benefited by thoſe privileges, or to receive that protection, to which an obſerver of them is entitled.

Yet notwithſtanding the influence which the practice of duelling has obtained, and the encouragement which it meets with, ſtill, there is little doubt, if proper methods were adopted, that it might be reſtrained, if not eradicated. I would not, however, recommend the laws of bloodſhed, except in caſes of particular aggravation.

tion. From the efforts which Lewis XIV. made, it is evident, that it is not to be ſuppreſſed by ſanguinary decrees. The only way of effectually checking the growth of any vice, is to ſtrike at the root. Inſtead of bewailing the effects, we ought to inveſtigate the cauſe. In this reſearch, we ſhall diſcover, that the motive, which commonly induces men of real courage to accept a challenge, is the dread, in caſe of refuſal, of being calumniated with the ſtain of cowardice. And as the acute Monſ. Vattel has remarked, " Pendant qu'un gentilhomme, en obeiſſant à la loi, ſe fera regarder de ſes égaux comme un lâche, comme un homme déſhonoré; qu'un officier dans le même cas, ſera forcé de quitter le ſervice; l'empêcherez-vous de ſe battre, en le menaçant de la mort. Il mettra, au contraire, une partie de ſa bravoure à expoſer doublement ſa vie pour ſe laver d'un af-

front." We ſhould therefore ſtrive to overcome this inveterate prejudice of mankind, and to change the current of popular opinion. This can only be effected by ſome law againſt duelling, which will impoſe a durable and diſgraceful penalty. Let it be ſomewhat ſimilar in its nature to that which was ordained by Pharamond, whereby he, who ſent or accepted a challenge, even though death were not the conſequence, was deprived of his eſtates, degraded from his rank, and deemed incapable of ſerving in any office. Let it, by rejecting the offender from ſociety, caſt an indelible ſtigma on his reputation. The puniſhment of the perſon attacked, might, perhaps, according to circumſtances, ſometimes admit of alleviation; but that of the aggreſſor ſhould be uniformly and ſcrupulouſly inflicted.

Were

Were ſuch regulations to be enforced, people would be more on their guard. They would have no motive to quarrel without provocation, or, on receiving the ſlighteſt inſult, to have recourſe to the moſt barbarous revenge. Politeneſs would continue to flouriſh, without the aſſiſtance of depraved and unreaſonable notions; and a man's character would depend more on the practice of virtue, than the defence of vice.

THE END.

I therefore flatter myself with hopes, that although by the strict letter of his majesty's proclamation, these vessels, with their cargoes, may be liable to confiscation, yet that the lords of appeal will remember that good maxim of the law "Summum jus, Summa injuria;" which, if they should be condemned, will be most fatally verified, not more to the detriment of individuals, than of the public.

FINIS.